Historic Photo Album of the Minot Pratt and Alvin Adams Families

(Revised May 2023)

Introduction, annotations and genealogical appendix by Ray Angelo

Presented below is a small collection of 19th century photographs of two notable American families in an album from that time. The album comprises just 23 photographs. It has been passed down from the family of Minot Pratt by his eldest son Frederick Pratt (who survived all his siblings and parents) and by his only child, Henry Minot Pratt, to a present-day descendant of these Concord residents. This descendant has kindly given permission for this online publication of the album. The hope is that someone possessing a similar collection of photos of the related family, that of Alvin Adams, prominently represented in this album, will come forth with some copies of the same photos properly identified. No more than six of the 23 photos in this album appear to be correctly identified. Of these, four are children of Alvin Adams and only one is of a Pratt family member. The sixth is related to both families by marriage.

Minot Pratt was a founder of the Brook Farm community and was a good friend of Henry Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathanial Hawthorne and Amos Bronson Alcott. Minot's daughter, Caroline, was a good friend of the Alcott sisters, and one of his sons married the oldest Alcott sister, Anna. This married couple is pictured in the album with photographs that have been published only in recent years. More can be found about Minot Pratt and his family in the biographical sketch at: https://archive.org/details/minot-pratt-bio/mode/2up

The Alvin Adams family was a wealthy one. Alvin founded a successful delivery company in Boston that still exists under his name (now an investment firm) and which is one of the oldest companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange. His portrait is in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. The Adams and Pratt families were closely related because Adams's wife, Ann (Bridge) Adams, and Minot Pratt's wife, Maria (Bridge) Pratt, were sisters. That the Adams family took an active interest in the Pratt family can be seen at the time of the marriage of the Pratt son, John Bridge Pratt, to Anna Bronson Alcott in 1860. Anna Alcott records in her diary a number of gifts given to her and John by the Adams family at the time of their marriage.

In an album of such a small size it is to be expected that the focus, as in most family photo albums, would be in representing all the members of the immediate family. A careful review of this album allows a plausible accounting of all immediate members of both families alive as of about 1862 with only a few photos that are not of immediate family members.

The origin of the photograph collection can be reasonably surmised from the apparent identities in the collection, the organization of the collection, and surrounding circumstances. At least five, likely six, Adams family members occur at the very beginning of the album and two to four together occur later in the album. Misidentified photos of John Pratt and Anna Alcott facing each other on opposite pages occur in the middle of this photo album, likely taken at the time of their marriage and possibly paid for by the Adams family. Photographs of the size and quality in this album would cost about 1$ to $2 in 1860, about the amount of wages for a day's work at that time. For the Pratt and Alcott families with modest incomes this would be significant. For the wealthy Adams family this expense would be insignificant.

The occurrence of so many photographs of the Adams family at the beginning of the album and the photographs of John and Anna about the time of their marriage suggests that the Adams family gave most of the photographs to the Pratt family and likely paid for them in whole or in part. The gratitude of the Pratt family can be surmised not only from the fact that the first five photographs in the album are of Adams family members, but also from the fact that Ann Adams is depicted in the very first photograph, with the opposing page blank. In addition, the fancy exterior front cover of the album is engraved with the word "Auntie" – which was Ann Adams's relationship to the Pratt children. This further supports the idea that the Adams family gave the photographs and possibly the album book itself to the Pratt family.

Identification of the photographs in the album is problematical in two respects. First, only four of the persons named in the album have published photographs that can be used for comparison. These are Louisa May Alcott, John Bridge Pratt, Frederick Gray Pratt (very recently published) and Frank Hall (only available in a rare Harvard class album). Of these, only one of the photos of John Bridge Pratt is correctly identified. Secondly, most of the captions are names that are not known to have any connection to the Pratt or Adams families. Published photos of Alvin Adams, Anna Alcott, Henry Minot Pratt, Frederick Gray Pratt, and John Bridge Pratt can be used to correct caption errors.

Not counting handwriting on two photographs deemed contemporaneously written, one with the writing on the photograph itself, and the other with a specific date in addition to the name, there are at least two handwriting styles for the other captions. It is evident that one caption writer was familiar with the Adams children (correctly named in the birth order they are placed in the album) and another one was vaguely familiar with the Pratt sons and a connection to the Alcotts. The identities of the caption writers and the origin of the incorrect names likely will remain unknown.

The album is nonetheless significant. Three of the photos in this album were published for the first time only in recent years (two of John Bridge Pratt and one of Anna Alcott Pratt). The remaining 20 are published here for the first time. Thirteen are of people with no known previously published photos.

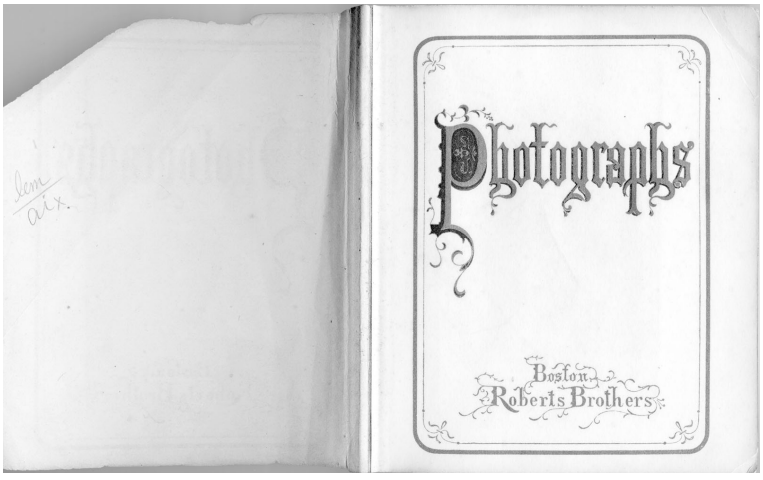
In spite of the obstacles almost all of the photographs can be identified with varying degrees of confidence based on the logic of their organization, facial resemblances and the simple fact that it is a rather small collection for two families. A reasonable assumption is that these precious photographs are chiefly limited to the most immediate members of each family alive in the period 1860-1862, i.e., between the marriage of John Pratt and Anna Alcott in 1860 and the only dated photograph (Dec. 25, 1862) at the end of the collection. The company that made the album book began manufacturing them in 1862, the likely year that most of the photos were assembled. Every immediate member of each of the two families known to be alive in 1862 can be accounted for in the collection in an order that makes sense.

After careful review it appears that the collection is organized as follows:

1. Ann Adams, aunt of the Pratt children, presented first and by herself as the deemed benefactress of the collection
2. All five of the surviving Adams children in the exact order that they were born, correctly labeled except for the last (youngest) one unlabeled
3. The most important members of the Pratt family – Minot and Maria Pratt in one photograph together
4. The youngest surviving members of the immediate Pratt family on facing pages – grandson Henry Minot Pratt and daughter Caroline Pratt
5. The oldest Pratt son and his wife on facing pages – Sarah Pratt and Frederick Pratt
6. The youngest surviving Pratt son and possibly the maternal grandmother of the Pratt children on facing pages – John Pratt and Rebecca Bridge
7. Profile views of the youngest surviving Pratt son and his new wife facing each other on opposite pages – John Pratt and Anna Alcott
8. The two Adams parents in their younger years on facing pages – Alvin Adams and Ann Adams
9. The two Adams parents at the time of most of the photographs in the album, on facing pages – Alvin Adams and Ann Adams
10. Likely a Pratt/Adams aunt, sister of Ann Adams and Maria Pratt, alone but with her husband's photograph a few pages later – Lydia Williams
11. Likely the very last photo added to the collection circa 1875 moved to this page from the last page, the two Pratt parents in their old age, sitting together – Minot and Maria Pratt
12. A Pratt/Adams uncle (whose wife's photo is likely two pages previously) and possibly the first child of John and Anna Pratt on the facing page – Captain John Williams and Frederick Alcott Pratt

Twelve of 23 the photographs can be identified with relative certainty. Perhaps only three are somewhat tentative. The rest are regarded here as likely correct. More information is given with the photographs below. Anyone with corroborating or contradicting evidence can contact this author at angelor@rocketmail.com, or, failing that, the Orchard House in Concord, MA. Thanks go to Richard Higgins for his suggested revisions to improve the readability of this introduction.

Dimensions of pages inside: 4.7" X 5.7"
Photo oval dimensions - exterior printed border: 2.6" X 3.8"
Photo oval dimensions - interior cut border: 2.15" X 3.4"



Title Page - no inscriptions on the flyleaf or interior cover. The Roberts Brothers added the making photo albums to their book business in 1862. They were bought out in 1898.

"Kass" (unknown name) - Ann Rebecca (Bridge) Adams (1800-1882), pictured further below in the same dress opposite her husband, Alvin Adams Sr. She was an aunt ("Auntie") of Frederick, John, and Caroline Pratt. Four of her surviving children (and likely the fifth) are pictured on the following pages in order of their birth years.

Alvin Adams [left] - Alvin Adams Jr. (1834-1863), son of Alvin Hoar Adams and Ann (Bridge) Adams, and a cousin of Frederick, John, and Caroline Pratt.

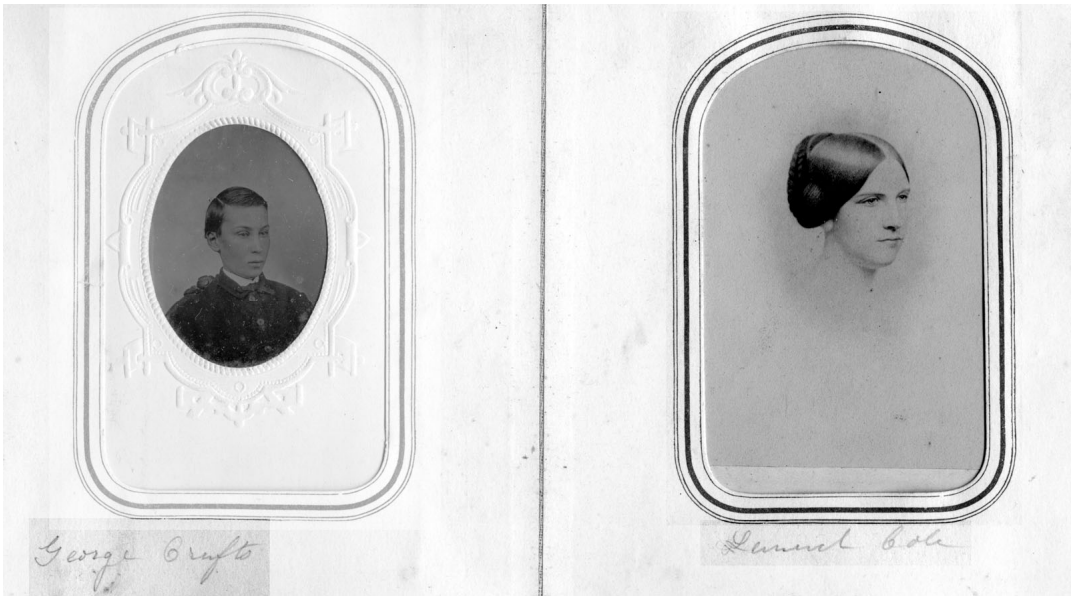
Waldo Adams (1836-1892) [right] - a son of Alvin Hoar Adams and Ann (Bridge) Adams, and a cousin of Frederick, John, and Caroline Pratt.

Edward Livingston Adams (1838-1906) [left] - a son of Alvin Hoar Adams and Ann (Bridge) Adams, and a cousin of Frederick, John, and Caroline Pratt.

Helen Frances Adams (1845-1922) [right] – a daughter of Alvin Hoar Adams and Ann (Bridge) Adams, and a cousin of Frederick, John, and Caroline Pratt. Her name is on the flyleaf of Minot Pratt's copy of Gray's Manual of Botany.

Unnamed girl [left] - position of this photo after the previous four Adams children in order of age, and her age at the likely time of most of these photos (circa 1860-1862), make this likely the next and last Adams sibling, Clara Belle Adams (1853-1876).

Frank Hall and unnamed woman [right] – misidentified since it does not match a known photo of Frank Rockwood Hall (1851-1926) in the Harvard Class of 1872 album (Harvard University Archives), and pictured man too old to be Frank Hall. Hall was a nephew of Maria Pratt and Ann Adams, the only child of their younger sister, Harriet Bridge (1816-1851). The woman in this photo appears later near the end of the album significantly more aged with the same man also more aged. Most likely the pictured pair are Minot Pratt (1805-1878) and Maria Pratt (1806-1891) as explained at their later photo.



George Crufts (unknown name)[left] – almost certainly Henry Minot Pratt (1853-1925), first grandchild of Minot and Maria Pratt, the only child of Frederick and Sarah Pratt. He later joined the Concord Independent Battery of which there is an 1874 photo of him (resembling this boy) in uniform with three other members. The boy also resembles the photo that is likely his mother, Sarah Pratt, at the next pair of pages. Henry Minot Pratt is a great-grandfather of the present owner of this album. See also next paragraph.

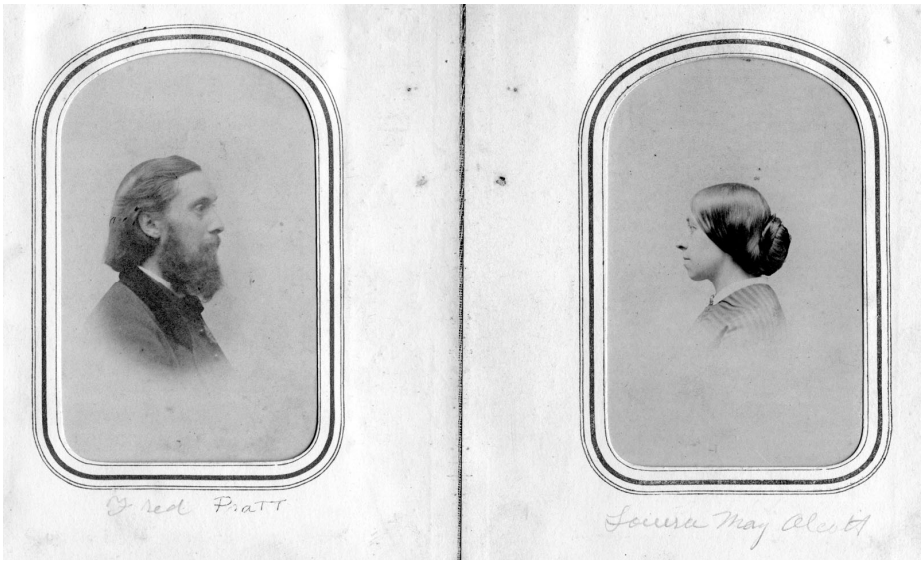
Laurel Cole (unknown name)[right] – likely Caroline Hayden Pratt (1836-1866), the only daughter of Minot and Maria Pratt. The apparent age of the woman agrees with her age at the time most of these photos appear to have been taken – about 1860. Also, it would be logical to place, Henry and Caroline, the two youngest, unmarried members of the immediate Pratt family here opposite each other.

Charlie Cruft (unknown name)[left] – very likely Sarah (Emery) Pratt (1833-1879), wife of Frederick Pratt, due to likely identity of photo on the facing page and the resemblance to son Henry Minot Pratt on the immediately preceding pages (resemblance apparently also noticed by the caption writer).

Arthur Palmer (unknown name)[right] – very likely Frederick Gray Pratt (1831-1905), oldest son of Minot and Maria Pratt due to the resemblance to the only known photograph of him and to his brother John pictured on the next pair of pages.

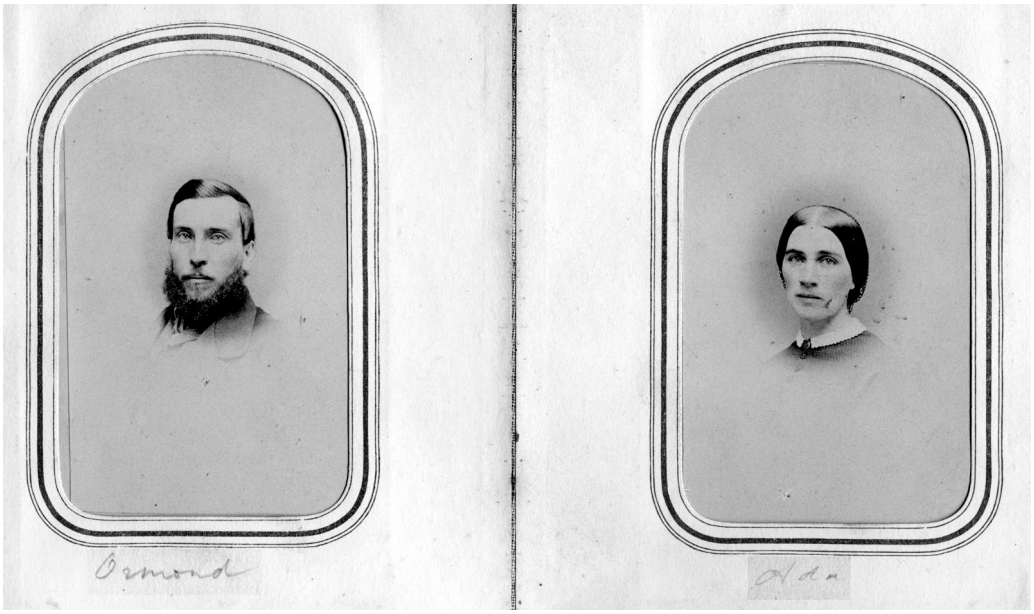
John Bridges [Bridge] Pratt (1833-1870) [left] - son of Minot and Maria Pratt, and husband of Anna Alcott Pratt (1831-1893).

Thomis[a] (unknown name)[right] – possibly Rebecca (Beal) Bridge (1787-1865), mother of Maria Pratt and Ann Adams, and grandmother to all the Pratt and Adams children. The paternal grandmother of the Pratt children died in 1841.



Fred Pratt [left] – previously unknown photograph of John Bridge Pratt (1830-1870), younger brother of Frederick Gray Pratt, from a known photo session.

Louisa May Alcott [right] – identified by experts as Anna Alcott Pratt (1831-1893) [older sister of Louisa], the wife of John Bridge Pratt on opposite page, previously unknown.



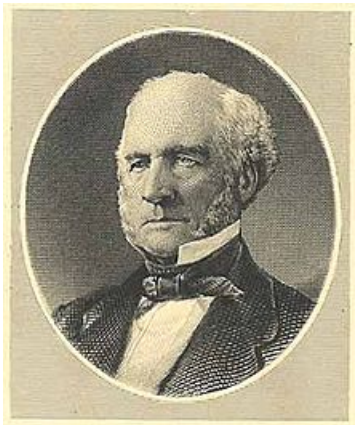
Osmond (unknown name)[left] – likely Alvin Hoar Adams, Sr. as a young man.

Ada (unknown name)[right] – likely Ann Rebecca (Bridge) Adams as a young woman.

"Fogal" [written over "George"] (unknown names) [left] – Alvin Hoar Adams, Sr. (1804-1877) by comparison with known images of him (see below). Uncle of the Pratt children.

Unnamed woman [right] - Ann Rebecca (Bridge) Adams (1800-1882), based on position opposite her husband on facing page and expensive dress, also pictured at beginning of this album in the same dress, aunt of the Pratt children.

Known images of Alvin Hoar Adams (1804-1877):



ca. 1850

Alvin was founder of the Adams Express Company in 1854, one of the oldest companies still listed on the New York Stock Exchange (symbol ADX); married Ann Rebecca Bridge (1809-1882), a sister of Maria Jones Bridge (1806-1891), wife of Minot Pratt (1805-1878).

George (unknown name) - possibly Lydia Jackson (Bridge) Williams (1811- after 1870), the only surviving sibling in the early 1860s of Maria Pratt and Ann Adams, resembling the latter, and wife of Capt. John Williams whose photograph is a few pages later.

Georgie Burr (unknown name) and unnamed person – most likely Minot Pratt (1805-1878) and his wife, Maria (Bridge) Pratt (1806-1891), since both appear earlier in the album much less aged in a photo labeled "Frank Hall". Appearance as a couple twice in the album implies much importance (heads of this Pratt family). Also, the older man agrees with a description of Minot Pratt by Brook-Farmer John Codman – "a finely formed, large, graceful-featured, modest man." The same name "Georgie Burr" appears at the very end of the album with the picture missing suggesting that this was the last photo added to the album and later moved to its present position. Assuming this move of the photo and the identification as Minot and Maria Pratt, the photograph likely dates from about 1875.

Capt.[ain] John Williams (1797-1869), Dec. 25, 1862 [left] - sea captain who married Lydia Jackson Bridge (1811- after 1870), the younger surviving sister of Maria Pratt and Ann Adams. Thus, he was an uncle of the Pratt and Adams children. A possible photo of Lydia occurs a little bit before.

unnamed infant [right] – due to its likely birth year and position immediately after a photo dated at the end of 1862 this is very possibly Frederick Alcott Pratt (1863-1910), first child of John and Anna Alcott Pratt, and the second grandchild of Minot and Maria Pratt.

Names on succeeding pages with photos missing:

Harry Clark

Georgie Burr (see photo on a preceding page with the same name)

Frances Burr (on opposing page of the page with Georgie Burr name)

[END]

APPENDIX: Descendants (and their spouses) of John Bridge and Rebecca (Beal) Bridge living in 1862-1863

Name in [ ] brackets indicates deceased parent with living descendant

1. John Bridge (1783-1870) & Rebecca (Beal) Bridge (1787-1865)

2a. Maria Jones (Bridge) Pratt (1806-1891) & Minot Pratt (1805-1878)

3a. Frederick Gray Pratt (1831-1905) & Sarah (Emery) Pratt (1833-1879)

4a. Henry Minot Pratt (1853-1925)

3b. John Bridge Pratt (1833-1870) & Anna Bronson (Alcott) Pratt (1831-1893)

4a. Frederick Alcott Pratt (1863-1910)

3c. Caroline Hayden Pratt (1836-1866)

2b. Ann Rebecca (Bridge) Adams (1809-1882) & Alvin Adams (1804-1877)

3a. Alvin Adams Jr. (1834-1863)

3b. Waldo Adams (1836-1862) & Isabella Hortense (Burnham) Adams (1839-1938)

3c. Edward Livingston Adams (1838-1906)

3d. Helen Frances Adams (1845-1922)

3e. Clara Belle Adams (1853-1876)

2c. Lydia Jackson (Bridge) Williams (1811-after 1870) & Cpt. John Williams (1797-1869)

3a. Harriet Hall Williams (1851-1905)

2d. [Harriet (Bridge) Hall (1816-1851)] & Samuel Hall Jr. (1815-1907)

3a. Frank Rockwood Hall (1851-1926)